

Royal Society Medallists, 1979

In order to mark the centenary of the birth of Lord Kelvin (26 June 1924) the Royal Society of Western Australia decided to institute an award for outstanding work in science associated with Western Australia, to be known as the Royal Society Medal (it should be noted that the term Kelvin Medal sometimes associated with this award is incorrect and owes its origin to the Kelvin celebrations with which the award was associated at its inauguration.) The last medal (the 11th) to be awarded was in 1970 and the Royal Society Council has selected three medallists for the year 1979. This was decided because of the very high calibre of the scientists available for selection and in acknowledgement of the State's 150th Anniversary (CFHJ).

R. M. Berndt

Ronald Murray Berndt, born in Adelaide in July 1916, received his early education at Pulteney Grammar. Prior to going to Sydney to study under the late Professor A. P. Elkin, he was attached to the South Australian Museum in an honorary capacity. At the University of Sydney he obtained a Diploma of Anthropology in 1943, B.A. in 1950 and M.A. with First Class Honours in Anthropology and the University Medal in 1951. Jointly with his wife, Dr. Catherine Berndt, he was awarded by the Royal Society of N.S.W. the Edgeworth David Medal for Anthropology in 1950.

Professor Berndt and his wife have carried out extensive field research in Aboriginal Australia, and during 1951-53 they worked in the eastern highlands of New Guinea. Then they studied at the London School of Economics under Professor (later Sir) Raymond Firth, obtaining their doctorates in 1955. Ronald Berndt held a Nuffield Foundation Travelling Fellowship and a Leverhulme Award at that time, and then a Carnegie Corporation Travelling Fellowship which enabled them both to visit a wide range of university departments of Anthropology and Sociology in Canada and the U.S.A.

Returning to Australia in 1956, Ronald Berndt took up a senior lecturership in Anthropology at the University of Western Australia to develop teaching and research in that discipline. He became a Reader in 1959, and Foundation Professor of Anthropology in 1963. Over the years the Department of Anthropology has expanded considerably, and in 1976 it took up its new quarters in the Social Sciences Building, where the Anthropology Museum is located.

Professor Berndt and his wife have continued to specialize in Aboriginal studies, carrying out research in the Western Desert, the Kimberleys and Arnhem Land. He has concentrated primarily on problems of social control, structure and organisation, mythology and ritual, as well as socio-cultural change. His publications, some of which are written in conjunction with his wife, reflect these emphases. Among them are *Kunapiipi* (1951), *Djanggalwul* (1952) and *Australian Aboriginal Religion* (1974). With his wife, there are



Man, Land and Myth in North Australia (1970), *The First Australians* (1952/1974) and *The World of the First Australians* (1964, revised 1977). He has also edited, for instance, *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology* (1970), *The Australian Aboriginal Heritage* (1973) and *Aborigines and Change* (1977); and edited with his wife *Aboriginal Man in Australia* (1965), and one of the sesquicentennial series of volumes, *Aborigines of the West* (1979).

Professor Berndt is a member of a number of societies. For example, he is a foundation and Council member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies; first chairman of the (breakaway) Australian Association of Social Anthropologists (which later became the Anthropology Association of Australia); Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia; the first President of the Anthropological Society of Western Australia; Past-President of Section F. of ANZAAS; and was President of the Royal Society of Western Australia in 1972-73.

B. J. Grieve

Brian John Grieve was born in Allan's Flat Victoria in August 1907 and was educated at Williamstown High School and the University of Melbourne. He graduated B.Sc. with 1st class honours in botany in 1929 and received an M.Sc. in 1930. As an 1851 Exhibition Scholar he continued his studies at the Botany Department of the Imperial College of Science obtaining a Ph.D and a Diploma of Imperial College in 1932.



In 1933 he joined the staff of the Botany Department University of Melbourne and later carried out research at the University of Cambridge. At the outbreak of World War II he served as Lieut. Cdr. (S), R.A.N.R. but was manpowered back to university work. In 1947 Grieve was appointed Head of the Botany Department at the University of Western Australia and became Foundation Professor of Botany in 1957, a position which he held until his retirement in 1972 with the title of Emeritus Professor. He has continued research as an Honorary Research Fellow in the University.

Throughout his career Professor Grieve has held many important positions and has served on numerous influential committees and organisations. He was Dean of the Faculty of Science University of Western Australia for 1954-55 and was for many years a member of the CSIRO State Committee and the Nuffield Foundation Advisory Committee. He also served as a member of the King's Park Board from 1959-78 and was instrumental in the establishment of the State's Botanical Gardens. Prof. Grieve was elected President of Section M (Botany) for the Brisbane meeting of ANZAAS in 1951 and was President of the Royal Society of Western Australia on two occasions, in 1952-53 and 1970-71.

The value of his research has been recognised on several occasions: by the award of the Syme Prize and Gold Medal in 1943, election as a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London in 1939, Fulbright and Rockefeller Grants and a Scandinavian Fellowship award in 1956, election as a Fellow of the Institute of Biology, London in 1966 and admission to Honorary Membership of the Royal Society of Western Australia in 1975.

Apart from his official duties as Professor of Botany, Prof. Grieve has made a great contribution to botanical knowledge in Western Australia. His experimental research has centred on the absorption and transpiration

of water, the photosynthesis and the adaptation to summer drought of native plants. This work on the eco-physiology of Western Australian plants has brought him international recognition. Of outstanding significance is the 4 volume work entitled *How to know Western Australian wildflowers*. Appearing under the authorship of Grieve and Blackall the work is now almost entirely that of Prof. Grieve although it maintains the original format of the late Dr. Blackall's text. Revision of earlier published parts of this work—the only modern manual on the flora of this floristically diverse region—is actively continuing with parts IIIA and IIIB shortly to be published.

D. L. Serventy

Dominic Louis Serventy was born at Brown Hill Western Australia in March 1904. As a school boy he showed a keen interest in natural history and attracted the attention of an eminent long-serving member of this Society and former medallist, Ludwig Glauert. Glauert had a powerful influence on Serventy's early career and watched with satisfaction as the enthusiastic young naturalist grew into a biologist with a world-wide reputation.

Educated at Perth Boys' and Perth Modern School, Serventy graduated B.Sc. with 1st class honours in zoology at the University of Western Australia in 1931, and, as an 1851 Exhibition Scholar, he continued his studies at Gonville and Caius College Cambridge and was awarded a Ph.D in 1933. He returned to Western



Photo: Mercury, Hobart